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THE REGULARS IN THE CIVIL WAR.

BY RUFUS FAIRCHILD ZOGBAUM.

WHEN the menacing storm clouds of war burst, and "red rebellion," with blazing torch and armed hand, struck at the life of the nation, all throughout the land, east, west and north, from sea coast to prairie, from town and village, from shop and farm, from the schoolhouse itself, wave on wave, like a mighty river, ever "coming, Father Abraham, ten hundred thousand more," the manhood and youth of the country poured forth to its defense. Four long years of war transformed the raw volunteer recruit of '61 into the tried and hardy volunteer veteran of '65, as ore that passes through the ordeal of fire and forge turns to tempered steel, and the American citizen-soldier of that time has few if any peers in the history of the world. But it is not to his disparagement to say that there already stood under the colors a body of experienced and splendidly trained soldiery, who, had their strength been in comparison with their magnificent courage and disciplined devotion to duty, would have spared the nation the sacrifice of thousands of lives and millions of treasure.

Less than fourteen thousand strong, then, as now, inadequate in point of numbers for the duties imposed upon it, the outbreak of hostilities between the States found the regular army scattered in small detachments over a vast territory, the cavalry and infantry almost constantly in conflict with the savage foe of advancing civilization, the artillery covering with a thin and broken line the long extent of sea coast on two oceans. Imbued with an *esprit de corps* born of the wars of three-fourths of a century, bound together by common share in the dangers and vicissitudes of the life they led, the soldiers of the "Old Army" formed a distinct class by themselves, representing, in its composition, traditions and history, the incarnation of the spirit of respect for

law and order that forms the foundation of the republic. Proud and self-reliant, they knew no other life but that which duty called on them to live, and to them the flag they bore was the emblem of the honor of the country, the army and the regiment.

So it was when the grand old Third Infantry, under orders to evacuate Texas, was halted on its march to the coast, and the intimation given to it that it would be well to march around the city of San Antonio for fear of the consequences that might ensue, in the excited state of the community, should the column attempt to pass through the town. All the fiery pride of the gallant "Buff Sticks"* burst into flame at the insult. What! "Sneak around by the by-ways when the main road was open!" Hide the colors in a box, the colors that had followed "Mad Anthony Wayne," that had flaunted defiantly in the faces of Pakenham's veteran red coats at New Orleans! Put away the starred ensign that had flashed triumphant through the smoke of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Monterey, that had crowned the heights of Cerro Gordo, and waved over the assailing columns at Churubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and Mexico! Fall in! To your posts, gentlemen! Full dress shall be the uniform of the day. And with colors floating proudly, band playing, with gold epaulettes and polished brass shoulder scales glistening, and bright bayonets flashing back the sun's rays, the regiment marches straight through the town in the face of the gathering crowds of angry people. So it was when the Second Cavalry—now the Fifth—riding away northward from the Texan frontier, turned back in its march at the call for help of their former friends, now their enemies, but yet their fellow countrymen, to strike and disperse the savage bands swooping down upon the settlements the regiment had shielded for so many years. So it was, too, when many of the enlisted men of detachments, overpowered or basely surrendered during the evacuation, escaped from their captors, and making their way by devious routes, some of them through Mexico, to New York, reported themselves at headquarters there "present and ready for duty." While it is true that many of the commissioned officers, Southern born, taught from infancy to believe that allegiance to the State was paramount to allegiance to the Union, yielding to pressure from families and friends, threw up their commissions and espoused the cause of

* "Buff Sticks" was a nickname given to the regiment in the Mexican War.
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the Confederacy, the great mass of their comrades kept faith with the nation, and the enlisted force to a man remained true to the colors it had sworn to defend. So it was, finally, that Sumter's puny garrison, deserted and abandoned to its fate by those in authority, but staunch and undismayed, struck defiantly back at the encircling ring of assailants in defense of the principles of the Constitution and for the honor of the flag and the army.

All the world knows the story of what followed. Throughout the entire South the people rose in arms, and the wave of rebellion was almost lapping the steps of the Capitol. The whole country was ablaze with the fire of patriotism, and the land resounded with the tread of marching thousands hastening to the now "inevitable conflict." Then came First Bull Run, where, interposing its small but invincible front between the fleeing crowd of panic stricken fugitives and the victorious foe, a little band of regulars checked the pursuit, and saved what had been called an army. So from the beginning their "disciplined courage" rose superior to misfortune and danger, and again and again on one bloody field after another they wrested victory from disaster and won honor and glory in the very face of defeat.

Differing only in the locality of the fields of their glory, alike in the record of their heroism, the story of one body of these men is the story of all, and in the history of the war there are no brighter pages than those which tell of the "Regular Brigade" of the Army of the Cumberland and of that "incomparable infantry" of the Second Division, Fifth Corps, Army of the Potomac—"Sykes' Regulars."

On the organization of the Fifth Corps in the spring of 1862, the troops of the regular army composing the first and second brigades of the second division consisted of the Second, Third, Fourth, Sixth and Tenth regiments and one battalion each of the Eleventh, Twelfth, Fourteenth and Seventeenth United States infantry*. The batteries attached to the division were L and M of the Fifth and I of the First regiments of artillery. The third brigade was composed of volunteer troops, the Fifth New York—Duryea's Zouaves, one of the most renowned and distinguished volunteer regiments of the Army of the Potomac—the Tenth New York and the First Connecticut. The latter two regiments

* Subsequently added to by battalions of the 7th and 19th infantry.

were subsequently removed and the One Hundred and Fortieth and One Hundred and Forty-sixth New York attached in their place. Brigadier General George Sykes, U. S. army, commanded the division. Of the "regular" regiments the Second, Third, Fourth, Sixth, Seventh and Tenth were old regiments, the others were battalions of eight companies each of the new regiments authorized in 1861 by the act of Congress increasing the regular establishment. In his history of the Fifth Corps Colonel W. H. Powell says: "Around the standards of the old regiments were clustered all the traditions of the country's wars—a sacred trust they guarded well on every field." They were tried men, these splendid veterans, while in the new regiments most of the men and many of the officers were now to face the "dread ordeal of battle" for the first time. "When one of the newly organized battalions of the Regular Brigade of the Army of the Potomac reported to Colonel Buchanan, he said to its commander: 'Sir, your men look like volunteers!' The reply was: 'That is just what they are.' The veteran martinet rejoined: 'I will make them regulars'—and he did!" So writes Colonel Anderson in his historical sketch of the Fourteenth Infantry. Association with their veteran comrades in arms, precept, example and environment, added to their natural intelligence and aptitude, soon imbued these troops with the discipline and spirit of the older regiments. "They act like mustangs, but they fight like men," was the comment of an old officer watching one of these battalions moving forward to the attack, cheering loudly, under the devastating fire of the enemy.

The glory of the achievements of the regular batteries—field and horse artillery—shines resplendent through the smoke of four years of battle. Distributed through all the armies of the Union the batteries of the regular line were practically independent commands, the regimental formations existing more as a matter of form than as actual organizations. As with the infantry and cavalry, the superior officers of artillery held high commissions in the volunteer forces, and the command of batteries fell to younger officers, by whose names, written in characters of fame in the chronicles of the war, they will be known while the thunder of their guns reverberates down through the past from nearly every field of contest throughout the length and breadth of the land, from the first defiant shot from Sumter to the last

gun aimed at the last army of the Confederacy.* Wherever the fire was hottest the regular batteries were conspicuous, and their splendid drill and organization, "their habitual devotion," inspired the entire Union artillery with a spirit of emulation and confidence worthy of the "full genius of the arm."

In the tragedies of the Seven Days' battles on the Peninsula "Sykes' Regulars" played a leading rôle; their positions on more than one field of that thrilling campaign of victory in defeat were marked in stubborn lines of fire and blood, and Gaines's Mill and Malvern stand at the beginning of their proud record in the Army of the Potomac.

During the initial attack of the Confederates at Gaines's Mill Sykes' division bore the brunt of the fight against overwhelming numbers. "With twenty-six regiments, four battalions and three batteries, General Hill, though his brave men had done all that any soldiers could do, had failed to carry the line that was held by nine regiments (finally increased to eleven), three battalions and two batteries."† Eleven out of the sixteen organizations composing this line consisted of regular troops, and the returns of their losses show how desperate was their resistance to the onslaughts of the gallant enemy. As the fight progressed the entire Fifth Corps became engaged, struggling obstinately against the repeated attacks of the Confederates who hurled forth the masses of their choicest and bravest troops under the command of such leaders as Jackson, Longstreet, D. H. and A. P. Hill and Ewell. That splendid soldier, Fitz-John Porter, stood like a lion at bay, his repeated calls for reinforcements unanswered until late in the afternoon, when Slocum's division arrived on the field too late to retrieve the fortunes of the day. Decimated, worn out by long hours of continuous fighting, the Union line, sturdily resisting, but forced back by preponderance of numbers, gave way under the final attack of the Confederates. "The well disciplined Federals continued in retreat to fight with stubborn resistance," reported General Jackson, so stubbornly and with such a determined and valiant front that the Confederate general, Whiting, was compelled, even in the flush of victory, to call on Longstreet for reinforcements.

* The garrison of Fort Sumter at the time of the bombardment was composed of detachments from the First Artillery. A battery of the same regiment fired the last cannon shot of the war from the Union side.

† Powell's *History of the Fifth Corps*.

It was at this moment that five troops of the Fifth Cavalry, in gallant and unquestioning obedience to orders, swept down upon the advancing hosts of the enemy in a wild and desperate charge, second to none in the annals of warfare.

"The sun had sunk below the horizon, the heavy smoke of battle was hanging thick over the field, and the last attack of the enemy had been made and won. Only the cavalry and a part of the artillery remained on this part of the field. A brigade of Texans, broken by their long advance, under the lead of the hardest fighter in all the Southern armies, came running on with wild yells, and they were a hundred yards from the guns. It was then that the cavalry commander ordered Capt. Charles J. Whiting, with his regiment, to the charge. No one had blundered; it was the supreme moment for cavalry, the opportunity that comes so seldom on the modern field of war, the test of discipline, hardihood and nerve. Right well was the task performed. The 220 troopers of the Fifth Cavalry struck Longstreet's veterans square in the face. Whiting, his horse killed under him, fell stunned at the feet of the Fourth Texas Infantry, Chambliss was torn almost to pieces with six wounds. Sweet was killed. Only one of the other officers was unwounded. Unsupported and almost without officers the troopers were stopped by the woods of the creek bottom, returned, reformed, and were soon after opposed to the enemy in covering the retreat of the Federal Army. Two days later the same troops were engaged at Savage Station. The guns which were in condition to retire were saved. No action was ever more worthy of a poet's genius; no cavalry charge was ever ridden better or against more helpless odds of numbers. In other lands every survivor of Balaclava has been pensioned and decorated; the German nation will always delight over the record of its cavalry at Vionville and Mars-la-Tour, and the great Chancellor was never so proud as when he embraced his sons who rode in the ranks on that day; the memory of the sacrifice of the French cavalry at Sedan is still a balm for many wounds. But while Cardigan, Bredow and Gallifet, each in his own land received every honor, it is strange to relate that Whiting was dismissed for alleged disloyalty a few months after Gaines's Mill, reinstated after the war, and mustered out of service at the consolidation in 1870.*

Proudly defiant, slowly contesting the field of battle foot by foot, more dangerous in defeat than in the full tide of success, and never for a moment losing their cohesion or yielding to coward panic, Sykes' sturdy infantry hung like bulldogs on the flanks of their batteries, and aided in the repulse of repeated and desperate attacks upon them of a brave enemy, flushed with triumph and eager to bear away the guns as trophies of their victory. The famous "Second" retiring, as ordered, in line of battle, colors flying, halted and turned on the enemy, driving him back and saving a disabled battery. The loss of this regiment was one hundred and forty-eight out of an effective force

* Capt. Eben Swift, Fifth Cavalry.

of four hundred and forty-six! As night fell the ceaseless roll of musketry over on Sykes' right told how the Fourth Infantry was covering the retirement of Weed with his guns. The Confederates poured out from the woods on all sides, but the disciplined regulars, seizing and valiantly holding every point of vantage, facing by wings at right angles to their line, and by sheer pluck and endurance hurling back the pursuers on their flanks, kept the hostile battalions at bay until their comrades were well on the way to safety, then slowly fell back in the approaching gloom of night to the banks of the Chickahominy. Like watch-dogs, all night they lay between their comrades and the foe, until at daylight they sullenly and reluctantly crossed the river, destroying the bridge on their way, the last of the Federal forces to pass the Chickahominy.

Gaines's Mill was the first battle for the Twelfth and Fourteenth. In his report of the action the brigade commander, Col. Buchanan, states that: "The two old regiments, the Third and Fourth, maintained their previous reputation, and the new battalions, the Twelfth and Fourteenth, earned one for themselves." Referring to the charge made by the last named, he says that "they advanced in as handsome a line of battle as I ever saw on drill." Their losses were very heavy, the Twelfth losing two hundred and twelve out of a total of four hundred and seventy, the loss of the Fourteenth, by a curious coincidence, being identical with that of the sister regiment.

The limits of this article forbid more than brief mention of the services of the brave men of Sykes' Division in all the desperate fighting on every field from Gaines's Mill to Gettysburg. Malvern, Manassas (Second Bull Run), Sharpsburg, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg all bear witness to the prowess of the regulars, their sacrifices, their discipline and fortitude, their steadiness under conditions of dismay and panic, their enthusiasm and bravery in attack, their stubborn and courageous resistance in retreat. These qualities shone forth conspicuously on the evening of the defeat of Pope's army at Second Bull Run, where once again, as in the battle on the same field the year before, the regulars stood at bay between the advancing hosts of the enemy and the torn and shattered columns of the Federal forces.

As when the tides of the ocean, rolling resistlessly onward in

great grey billows, are dashed back in broken spray and spume as they rush upon a rock-bound coast, so the fierce grey legions of Longstreet and Jackson, those peerless fighters of the Lost Cause, pressed onward in all their strength only to recoil again and again in angry discomfiture from the rock-strong, blue front of Sykes' men. Not until vastly outnumbered, the supply of ammunition nearly exhausted, did the movement of retreat begin, and then only on the receipt of orders to retire. Quietly and without confusion, in lines "as if on parade," closing up as the shot of the enemy tore gaps in their ranks, halting every few yards, facing about and delivering their fire by wings, in echelon of regiments in splendid order they moved gradually to the rear until night put an end to the battle, and the line of the army's retreat over the historical stone bridge had been saved. On the road to Centreville that night was all the dismay and disorder of a defeated army in full retreat. Sutler's wagons, guns, caissons poured in a tumultuous mass along the highway, mingled with them ambulances with their wretched loads of maimed and suffering humanity. Regiments, disorganized and in disarray, filled the fields on all sides, cavalry, infantry, and artillery struggling onward in apparently inextricable confusion, wet and miserable in the now steadily falling rain, while many, utterly exhausted, threw themselves on the sodden ground in hopeless despondency and discouragement. Filing in a compact column on to the Centreville turnpike, a body of troops, infantry and artillery, pushed its way steadily and resistlessly through the throngs of fugitives, halting or advancing as directed, in disciplined and orderly silence, broken only by the commands of the officers and the cadenced tramp of its march. From a group, dimly visible by the roadside through the darkening shadows of night the figure of a mounted officer detached itself, moving slowly out into the road, and an authoritative voice challenged: "What troops are these?" "Sykes' Regulars, sir!" came the prompt answer from the head of the gloom-enveloped column. Up went hand to hat brim as the officer bared his head to the storm in salute to the passing column. "They saved the army," he said; then in a voice hoarse with emotion General McDowell added the fervent words: "God bless the Regulars!"

An interesting illustration of the self-control and training of these men is given by an incident which occurred when McClel-

lan, peremptorily relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac, rode through its ranks in his farewell review of the army he had created. Probably no other commander of that splendid force ever possessed the personal love and devotion of the soldiers in the same degree as McClellan, and the enforced leavetaking between himself and his men gave occasion to a scene of ardent enthusiasm bordering on confusion as he rode along the wildly cheering lines of soldiers drawn up in review order until he reached the right of the line of the regular division. Here, with one simultaneous crash of wood and polished steel the long blue line came to the "present," and the battle-torn standards bowed gracefully forward in salute. An eye witness, describing the scene, says: "Who could have believed that these men, with their bronzed visages, their battle-scarred bodies and their proud, soldierly bearing, could weep? Yet some of them did." But their habits of discipline, their military pride and trained stoicism held the same stern sway over them in this moment as at all other times. Not a murmur, not a cheer broke from the serried front. "Silent as the grave" this war-worn soldiery stood motionless in martial salute to their beloved chief passing along their lines for the last time.

With their heroic stand at Manassas the Regulars of the Army of the Potomac reached the pinnacle of their glory. From that time on through the campaigns that followed they bore their full share, becoming so reduced in numbers that the splendid division that had so proudly and gallantly reared its steel fringed front at Gaines's Mill had become but a shadow of its former self at Gettysburg. Already in February, 1863, many of the companies had lost so heavily that their organizations were broken up, and what was left of the men assigned to other companies. Gen. Sykes being placed at the head of the Fifth Corps, the command of the Regular division fell to Gen. Romeyn B. Ayres, and under him proof was given once more of the magnificent morale of the troops on the sanguinary field of Gettysburg. Held in reserve with the rest of the Fifth Corps the two small brigades of now only fifty-seven companies, amounting in the aggregate to less than two thousand men, did not go into action until the disaster to the Third Corps, when their thinned and depleted ranks flung themselves desperately upon the triumphant Confederates, once again interposing themselves between their retreating comrades

of the volunteers and the pursuing enemy. Striking the Confederates in flank Ayres rolled them back upon themselves, and drove them in confusion from his front. But his enemies were too strong for him; outflanking him and gathering in his rear they poured volley after volley into his battalions, mowing the men down like blades of grass before the scythe. And now occurred an exhibition of indomitable pluck and determined and sagacious courage such as only highly trained and disciplined troops could show. Facing about, the little division forced its way slowly back again. The roar of musketry was so incessant that the words of command could scarcely be heard. Men were falling by hundreds, but the veteran lines steadily filled the gaps, answering blow with blow as they pressed on firmly, enveloped in a perfect hell of fire and death. The color staff of the Second is shot in two, the flag falling into the hands of the bearer. In the Seventh every second man is killed or wounded. The Tenth suffers a loss of sixty per cent. of its officers and over fifty-four per cent. of the enlisted men in a few moments. But there was no panic, no confusion, "not a single man left the ranks, and they allowed themselves to be more than decimated without flinching," until the hill was reached again, and they reformed their shattered lines in their old position, leaving behind them, in a long and ghastly trail of dead and wounded, eight hundred and twenty-nine of the nineteen hundred and eighty that had so gallantly advanced to the attack only a short time before. Was there ever a more heroic military sacrifice?

The rest of the story is soon told. Grant took but a few battered battalions with him the following spring, all that were left of "Sykes' Regulars." Too few in numbers now to exercise much influence on the fortunes of the army, they maintained the same undaunted front all through the carnage of that dreadful summer, fighting with the same distinguished valor, true to the proud traditions of their service to the very bitter end. To recruit their diminished ranks was practically impossible. States and counties paid enormous bounties to volunteers, a hundred influences combined to make that service attractive to the great mass of the recruits; and, actually worn out in the conflict, the regiments—some of them so depleted as to aggregate little more than the number allowed for a single company—were withdrawn from the field.

Their deeds emblazoned on the pages of history, sung of in impassioned verse by poets, their battles and victories, their final defeat and death perpetuated with all the genius of the painter's art, there stands in the story of the wars of another land, of another army, the record of a corps of soldiers to this day and for coming generations the pride and glory of their countrymen. Veterans selected for their aptitude for the profession of arms, physically superior, wearing a distinctive uniform and enjoying special privileges, splendidly armed and equipped, these magnificent troops obeyed but the will of one man in blind and disciplined devotion, yielding up their lives in the final hopeless struggle with the cry of "*Vive l'Empereur*" upon their lips. In the story of the fierce and sanguinary contests of the rebellion is told the tale of another corps of soldiers, wearing no distinguishing uniform, enjoying no special privileges, but equalled by few and surpassed by none in the history of wars, and as stood the Imperial Guard to the armies of France, so in blind devotion to duty and in trained and disciplined valor stood the line of the regular army, cavalry, artillery and infantry, to the armies of the Union. But here the comparison ends. Almost lost sight of in the overwhelming masses of the volunteers, neglected by Congress, and by the press, their superior officers absent with volunteer troops, their regiments commanded by captains and lieutenants, they wasted away under the pitiless fire of war and the ungrateful neglect of their countrymen, until little was left to the rank and file of the regular army but the glory of their deeds and the consciousness, in the breasts of the survivors, of duty well and faithfully done.

RUFUS FAIRCHILD ZOGBAUM.